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Rep. Tony Hwang asked for an example of the impact of arts education from areas beyond those I gave. The following examples were provided by Long Wharf Theatre and Music Haven in New Haven:

THE URBAN SUBURBAN PROJECT enables Long Wharf Theatre to serve as catalyst and pivotal force behind a partnership that includes the New Haven Public Schools and a suburban counterpart, Ansonia's Emmett O'Brien Vocational Technical School.

Students complete writing assignments and other activities throughout the program, working towards the creation of dramatic texts written in the voices of their counterparts. These texts are then compiled into a play performed by students.

Creating a pupil-to-pupil link between urban and suburban schools gives students an opportunity to reinforce what they've learned in the classroom, and to break down stereotypes of each other. ***The "achievement gap," the persistent and significant disparity between the academic achievement of low-income and minority children and their white, middle-class peers – is the most pressing education issue facing the United States today and arguably the biggest social and economic problem of any kind facing Connecticut. The 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress revealed that Connecticut's achievement gap at all levels, in all subjects, for all disadvantaged groups, is among the largest in the nation. Connecticut is being held accountable for student achievement, measured by standardized testing. It is critical that progressive and creative programs respond to expectations set for instruction and accountability.***

One group from last year's project developed a play about bullying. Kids from both urban and suburban schools learned that regardless of race, socioeconomic status or location, all kids deal with this issue in their daily lives. The empathy that they developed for each other made them more willing to stand up to injustice in their own environment.

It gave them a sense of achievement and empowerment as well. One real-life example: A high school student from last year's project was in trouble with the law.

She was scheduled for a court date the same day as the performance, but was determined to be there for the play. She managed to do both, proving to her peers, her teachers and the court how important the experience was for her and what she could accomplish, a lesson she will remember for the rest her life.

Connecticut Arts Alliance

MUSIC HAVEN, is a New Haven organization that provides free string music instruction to inner city kids, and shared the following story:

"Chris B. is one of our cello students who exhibited severe behavioral problems when he enrolled in Music Haven 4 years ago. He threw temper tantrums in class, was verbally and physically aggressive with teachers and other students, and received behavioral reports from his school teachers that described him as 'impossible to teach.' With an incarcerated father and a truant mother, he expressed a lot of frustration and anger.

When he began cello lessons, the Haven String Quartet members frequently took turns discussing anger management tactics with him, such as taking a time-out and walking down the hallway and back, expressing his frustration by playing angry chords on the cello, or drawing pictures of things that made him angry. This required a great deal of individual attention, made possible by our high teacher-student ratio.

Fortunately, he fell in love with the cello and his cello teacher, and over the course of the year, his schoolteacher started to use Music Haven as an incentive to encourage better behavior from him in the classroom. In the beginning, he would sometimes skip school and yet show up to Music Haven for lessons; we quickly informed him that we required everyone to attend school in order to attend Music Haven on a given day. From that day on, his school attendance improved markedly. His schoolteacher reported that his in-class behavior has also improved.

This year he assists the beginning cello students. His Music Haven teacher reported that recently 'he helped a younger child with his bow hold for twenty minutes. It was remarkable to see him - patient, kind, helpful, and proud.' His grandmother says 'when my grandson has a bad day, and he is told that he won't be able to attend Music Haven if he doesn't straighten up, believe me, he changes his attitude quickly. The quartet members are personally concerned about all the kids, and he knows they care about him. My grandson learned discipline through Music Haven, and I am forever grateful for such a wonderful program.'"